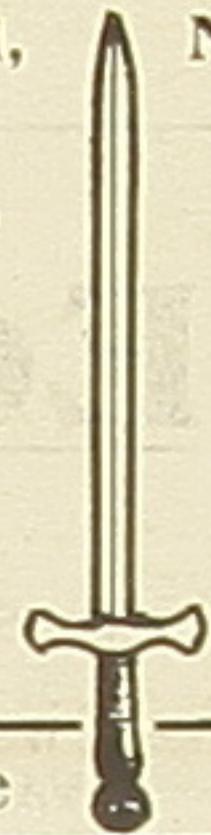
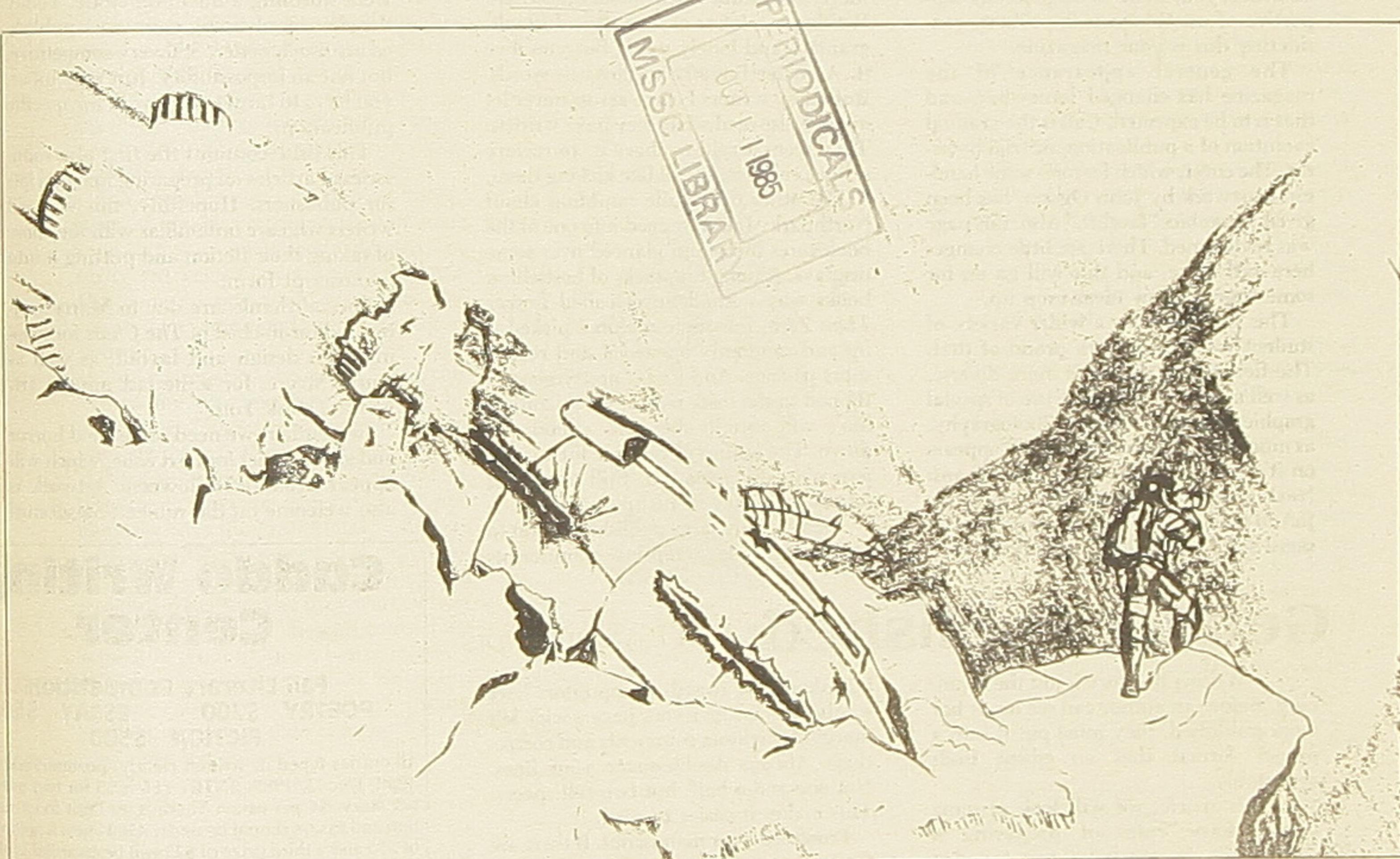


# AVALON



MISSOURI SOUTHERN'S STUDENT LITERARY MAGAZINE

Missouri Southern State College,  
Joplin, MO 64801-1595



## Fiction

### Differences

By Richard Strickland

### Old October

By Doug Johnson

## Poetry

Curtis Steere

Melody Cundiff

Craig Ball

Susan Stone

Clenell Sandles

Donovan

Michelle Shaw

# Editor's Column



By Simon P. McCaffery

Welcome to the second edition of AVALON! Since the publication of the first issue five weeks ago, some things have changed, and for the better. The amount of submissions is up (*Thank God*), and our audience, you, seems to be generally supportive of us. Which is important, considering this is *your* magazine.

The general appearance of the magazine has changed somewhat, and that is to be expected. Call it the gradual evolution of a publication, or trial by error. The cover, which features some handsome artwork by John Ogden, has been given a graphics "facelift." Also, this page was re-designed. There are little changes here and there, and this will go on for some time, as new ideas crop up.

This issue features a wider variety of student work, and I am proud of that. The fiction and poetry is more diverse, as well as the artwork. The use of special graphics has also increased. Photography, as much an art as the others, still appears on its own page, thanks to Rick Evans. Next issue we will see some work by JoAnn Hollis. Still, we want more submissions! Since AVALON is for students, they

should become more involved in its continued growth.

When I look around at many of the young people writing today, I want to give them a good kick. I see many young writers who take their work seriously, but not seriously enough. They sell themselves short and stunt their own ambitions. Writing is a labor of love. It is difficult, granted, and lonely work, but you love it. A writer literally wallows in words. But many writers I come across never let anyone else read what they have written. They seem afraid to share it, to receive serious criticism. I feel like kicking them.

The other day while rambling about Northpark Mall, I stepped into one of the bookstores there and glanced over some displays. Among the stacks of bestselling books was a small novel called *Lower Than Zero*. For some reason I picked it up and randomly opened it and read a short passage. And it was pretty good. I flipped to the back jacket, where author bio's will usually be, and almost fell down. The author of this fine little novel was only 20 years old. Still attending school, he wrote in his spare time.

Today, many large publishers admit to considering and accepting manuscripts

from young or unknown authors. There have been articles appearing in USA Today spotlighting younger writing talents. It is a current trend in publishing. So what's the matter with you guys? Many popular, successful writers today had to fight their way to be published like they were storming a medieval castle. Today the chances of seeing your work published are much better. Still very competitive, but not an impossibility. Just remember, you have to target your work for specific publications.

This issue contains the first of a mini-series of articles on preparing manuscripts for publishers. Hopefully, this will aid writers who are unfamiliar with the chore of taking their fiction and putting it into manuscript form.

Special thanks are due to Marty Oetting, editor-in-chief of *The Chart* for helping with design and layout, as well as Curtis Steere, for some last minute artwork. Thank You.

Remember, we need some good horror and ghost stories for next issue, which will appear around Halloween. Artwork is also welcome on the subject. So submit!

## Getting Published: Part I: Manuscripts

Writing the story is just the beginning. Before an author can see his or her work published, they must put it into a proper format that an editor finds acceptable.

In this article, we will look at some broad, basic rules of preparing a manuscript. If you have ever typed a manuscript and sent it off to a magazine or publisher, you know what happens when you don't prepare it the accepted way. If you are lucky, the editor might send you some material or a short note outlining the right things to do. If not, here are some suggestions that will help your manuscript survive what is known as the "Slush Pile" of submitted manuscripts.

First, always type your manuscript with good, black ribbon. Old, gray rib-

bon should be tossed. Compositors hate it. Also, always give your page a wide left margin for editors comments and corrections. Always double-space your lines. Not one-and-a-half, but two full spaces. This makes it easier to read.

Proofread your manuscript. If there are too many errors or grotty corrections, re-type it.

On the top of every page, in the upper right-hand corner, write your last name, a slash, a shortened title of the story, another slash, and the page number:

Smith/ "Big Country" / 2

You can have a separate title page, or just center the title and your name on the first page and begin your text lower. And remember, put your name and address on the front, so they know where to send the money!

## Caddo Writing Center

Fall Literary Competition  
POETRY \$200 ESSAY \$400  
FICTION \$500

All entries typed or written clearly, postmarked by night, Dec. 2, 1985. ENTRY FEE is \$5 for two poems per story, \$4 per essay. There is no limit to entries and Essays should be under 4500 lines. A second place of \$30 and a third prize of \$25 will be awarded in all categories.

Mail entries to: CADDOW WRITING CENTER  
P.O. Box 37679  
Shreveport, Louisiana 71133-7679

# AVALON

Missouri Southern's Student  
Literary Magazine

AVALON is published monthly by Missouri Southern's Student Literary Magazine staff members, coordinated by Simon P. McCaffery. Chad D. Stebbins serves as Adviser.

All material (artwork or manuscripts) to be submitted should be delivered or mailed to The Chart Office, Room 117 of Hearnes Hall. Phone extension is 228. If material is mailed, please include a self-addressed stamped envelope for return of material. NOTE: AVALON claims no rights of any kinds pertaining to original work that appears, whether it be art or text.

## Contributors

### Fiction:

Richard Strickland  
Doug Johnson

### Poetry:

Curtis Steere  
Donovan  
Craig Ball  
Susan Stone  
Melody Cundiff  
Clenell Sandles  
Michelle Shaw

### Art:

Ovie Pritchett  
John Ogden  
Curtis Steere  
Simon McCaffery

### Photography:

Rick Evans

# Differences

By Richard Strickland

As swift and silent as the garrote that he had used many times before, the elevator whisked Alex Duncan skyward. Being dressed in a three-piece suit that ran into four figures was not in his usual character. But that uneasiness could be endured for a few hours tonight. The mirrored sunglasses that hid his grey eyes from unwarrented view was also in keeping with his image tonight. As a concession to the weather he also wore a stylish dark trenchcoat.

The elevator doors opened on the top floor to reveal a young girl—not more than sixteen, Alex judged—dressed in a sexily cut version of a maid's uniform. Her long blonde hair, blue eyes and round face reminded him vaguely of Belinda.

"Mr. Duncan?" she asked. Alex confirmed the question with a nod of his head. "Mr. Killingsworth sent me to greet you, sir. May I take your coat?"

"Certainly." As she helped him doff the trenchcoat, Alex was struck by a very uncharacteristic thought. What, a hitman with a maid? He regretted the question as quickly as it formed. People were still people, no matter who they were or how they made a living. They all wanted the same things out of life. A better standard of living, love, and so much more. Just because they were hitmen, pimps, pushers, or hookers didn't mean that they were any less human.

"This way please, Mr. Duncan."

Alex allowed her to precede him down the hallway. Along the way he tested the atmosphere. Something was not quite right.

She held the door for him. It was a deference to his being a guest, so he entered the darkened suite first. The panoramic view of the city at night was breathtaking. He could see why Killingsworth chose the place. The night lights never cease and the view would never become dull. If and when he settled down, Alex thought, I'd want a place like this.

But Alex Duncan forgot all about the view and settling down when he felt the cool muzzle of a gun press firmly into the nape of his neck.

"Terribly sorry about this manner of greeting, old boy," came the British accented voice from behind him. "I'm afraid that I've seen far too many of your American westerns. Especially where the young and upcoming gunfighter decides to try his hand at the older, more experienced gunfighter. Not that I seriously suspect you of that, Mr. Duncan."



"I understand, sir," Alex replied. "A man in your position must take certain precautions."

"Of course. Would you take offense if Carla here were to search you?"

Alex looked at her. She had already put away his trenchcoat. The very model of efficiency. She had the look about her that said she might enjoy it. For that matter, he might just enjoy it too.

"No sir," he said. "I have no objections, but I do have a couple of points."

"Yes?"

"First, call me Alex, sir. Secondly, won't she think this a rather odd manner of greeting a guest?"

That provoked a chuckle. "Carla knows just exactly who and what I am, Alexander. Everything she has today she owes me. As you Americans say, she knows which side of her bread is buttered."

"Fine." To Carla: "Go ahead."

It quickly became apparent that Killingsworth had found a very adept pupil in Carla. It was a quick frisk, but it left nothing uncovered. If Alex had been foolish enough to bring a weapon with him, Carla would have found it. It was also apparent that she was taking a great deal of personal interest in this aspect of her job. Ah, you've stil got it, old boy, he grinned to himself.

"He's clean," she reported.

The muzzle was removed and Alex

turned to face his host. Paul Killingsworth looked every bit the part of a very well-to-do business exec, not one of the world's highest paid assassins. The gray around his temples, the glasses that he wore, all hepled with the executive image. Only his obvious physical shape—which was far better than any middle-aged executive that Alex had ever seen—and the look that lay just underneath his eyes betrayed that image.

The lights came up as Killingsworth spoke. "Allow me to apologize once more for the manner of greeting a guest."

Alex shook his head. "Like I said, I understand, sir. I might even think less of you if you hadn't. You are, after all, something of a legend."

"And you seem to be in the process of becoming one yourself, Alexander. Come, there is someone that I think you'd like to meet."

The minute that he laid eyes on her, Alex knew who she was. She was certainly the most beautiful woman that he had ever seen—and he had seen quite a few in his time. Tall, lithe, blonde, and put together to make all other woman blush and slink away in shame. But, he noticed, her beauty did more to provoke lust than simple admiration.

Her name was Dana Heights and she was almost as well known as Paul Killingsworth in the professional circles.

And she was as deadly as she was beautiful.

"I believe that you have heard of Ms. Heights, Alexander."

"Who hasn't?" he smiled and took her hand. "This is a very unexpected pleasure, Ms. Heights."

"I'd settle for Dana if you'll settle for Alex," she replied, returning his smile.

"Why not?"

They took seats, Killingsworth to an easy chair, Dana and Alex to opposite sides of a sofa. Alex shook his head. "This is much more than I bargained for. I thought I was going to spend a long, quiet evening with the Grand High Lama of our profession. But I find that I also get the chance to meet the person who's most responsible for making our profession an equal opportunity employer. I'm a bit dazed."

Killingsworth and Dana smiled. Carla came into view. "Can I offer you some refreshment, Alexander?" Killingsworth offered. "I've happened onto a batch of sherry that your genertion would say is out of this world."

Alex made a face at that. "No, thank you, sir."

"Then perhaps some fresh fruit juice?"  
"No, sir. I'd rather have nothing." Alex's smile broadened. "You have your precautions, sir. I have mine."

Killingsworth grinned in return. "Of course, Alexander. You have an aversion on my cutting down on my competition."

"If that was all there was to it, I'd gladly sample your sherry."

Carla finished making her rounds with the sherry. Both Killingsworth and Dana took one. Carla, he noticed, took one for herself and settled down on a second easy chair.

"How much is there to it than that?" Dana asked as she sipped hers.

"Much more. I suppose that you've heard of the Goose that laid the biggest golden eggs ever?"

"If you're referring to a certain young man who has made quite a number of very powerful enemies, yes, we have."

"Paul and I refer to him as the Ninja,"



not as the Goose," Dana put in.

"Ninja?" Alex asked.

"You know what a ninja is, don't you?"

"Only what I see in the movies," he smiled. "A ninja is supposed to be an ancient Japanese assassin."

"They were much more than that, Alexander. A sort of James Bond set in the middle ages."

Alex nodded. "So why do you call him that?"

"Simply because that is what he seems to be. His M.O. suggests it strongly."

"You've had a brush with him?" Dana asked, very interested now.

"A casual brush, yes. Do you know of Michael Putnam?" Alex asked.

"He's your partner, isn't he?"

"He was my partner, sir. He's dead now."

"What happened?" Killingsworth leaned forward slightly.

"He went for the Ninja, to use your

term."

Both of them were intensely interested, now. "How well do you know the circumstances of his death?"

"Extremely well. Do you want to hear it?"

"Certainly."

Well, Mike got it in his head he was going to go after him. He tried to talk me into going with him. I refused. As Clint Eastwood once said in one of his movies, "A man has to know his limitations." I know mine. And I know that he's beyond them.

"But I helped him to a point. I helped him set up some of the most expensive security that I've seen. I'll outline it because it's very important.

"Mike lived in one of those apartment buildings that you need a key just to get in. The firm that runs the building also has some rent-a-cops on duty. Inside the apartment we set up all kinds of security devices. Motion detectors, electric eyes, you name it. Some where in the open, others very carefully hidden. All had a backup power supply that was good for several hours. Every possible way into that apartment was covered. A mouse couldn't have entered undetected.

"All those devices were also wired into a small transmitter that would send a signal if any one of them had been tripped. With his receiver, he could pick the signal up a mile away and be alerted.

"After all that was done, he went hunting. He must have covered the globe. He spent money left and right, as if there was no tomorrow, looking for the Ninja or Goose or whatever you care to call him."

"Mike found him?"

"It was more a case of him finding Mike. He returned from a European trip and his girlfriend picked him up at the airport and took him home. She told me that he checked his receiver and it acted normally, so there was no warning signal.

"Up in the apartment, he poured drinks for them. He sipped his before she hers. He collapsed as if someone had thrown a switch in his brain. A cop friend of mine told me all of the glasses in the apartment had been coated with a dried colorless, odorless and tasteless poison that makes cyanide look tame."

Everyone was quiet for a long time. "It would appear that the Ninja had some kind of inside information," Killingsworth said. "The girl?"

"She'd no more kill him than you'd kill Carla. The gun rose and set on Mike as far as she was concerned."

"Yourself?"

"After we set up his apartment, I left for South America."

"That was you?" Dana said. Alex nodded. "That was a nice piece of work."

"Thank you."

"Here's an example of the man," Kill-

ingsworth said slowly, chewing over this latest piece of information. "A very fine example of him at his best. This ninja shows the world just what one man can do if he is totally dedicated to his craft. He is as cunning, as strong, as quick, as brave as any one man can possibly be, Alexander."

"If you doubt my statement, simply look at the man's record. He's taken on the American Mafia, the Columbian mobs—and we all know what they are like. He managed to cower them. At the height of that episode, he was knocking off the hitmen sent after him as soon as they were stepping off the plane."

"He's also put a severe crimp in the operations of the Russian KGB and GRU. The Cuban DGI. He's got most of the terrorist organizations in the world lusting after his blood. The security forces of over a dozen nations would love to get their hands on him. Some of those just to make some friendly talk, others for revenge. And lastly, but not least, he has people like ourselves, the free-lance professionals, after him."

"With all of those people after him, you'd think that someone, somewhere, would have some kind of lead on him. But on one does. About all that we know about him is that he's white, anywhere from 5' 8" to six-feet tall. His weight varies as well as the color of his eyes and hair. And that he is definitely a man. And that is all anyone has. That could fit half the world's population."

Alex nodded gravely as Carla went about refilling glasses.

"I tend to think that he's American," Dana commented.

"Why?"

"Just a hunch. It's not proven, but evidence strongly suggests that he's of English-speaking heritage. That leaves Canadian, American, British and Australian. All of those people have become a melting pot of cultures. Naturally, America is largest."

"You forgot South Africa. Rhodesian," Alex pointed out.

"You mean Zimbabwe."

"I stand corrected."

"True. But they have some funny ideas about race. He wouldn't have been able to become a ninja easily if he was either of those."

"He knows that. He, like you said, Alexander, knows his limitations and he goes to the limit all the time. He's intelligent enough to pass himself off as almost any native of any Western culture. That certainly doesn't help in trying to pinpoint him."

Alex did not miss the fact that Killingsworth was starting to sweat. As were Dana and Carla.

"The one thing that I don't understand," Killingsworth said, continuing, "is

the fact that he seems to favor the old fighting ways of the ninja. With sword and spear, so to speak. A ninja today would be something like—well, like if you took a British soldier in the Special Air Service Regiment, an American soldier in the Special Forces, and a German policemen in the West German GSG-9, all rolled up and combined into one individual."

"All that information is fine," Alex said. "It's important to know your target and his capabilities, but with this ninja, it doesn't get us any closer to closing down his operation."

"Whoever gets him," Killingsworth said at length, "will have to be his equal in intelligence, cunningness, strength, and courage. And that's just for a one-on-one basis, forgetting about someone nailing him on a lucky shot. And that's also just to make everything equal; the results can't be predicted."

"The word is, sir, that you're the man."

Killingsworth laughed. "I am honored, Alexander. I might be. And I might not. Dealing with him is a young man's game. I'm no longer a young man, I know, but I might have it in me for this one last job."

"But I would certainly like to be in on the job, even if it cost me money, even if I'm only in an advisory role. I'd certainly like to see that battle royal, as two or three bright, experienced people—such as you and Ms. Heights—try to take him."

"If it was a successful attempt, yes, I think I'd like that sir. But at a later point." Alex could not help notice all three were sweating profusely now.

Killingsworth was musing now, to himself. "I realize that such an opportunity may never arise, that you should kill him whenever the chance arises—but I would like to talk to him. It could prove to be an interesting conversation." Unsteadily—from the effects of three glasses of sherry?—he set down his glass.

"It has been, sir," Alex said quietly. "Eh?"

"It has been a very interesting conversation, Mr. Killingsworth. I'm afraid I've played a small deception on your part, sir," Alex smiled. "I am the person we've been discussing tonight."

Alex's voice left no doubt as to the truth of his statement.

"Ah, I see it in your eyes. You're discovering the effect of the chemical I've put into your sherry last night. I'm sure you'll like it. Odorless, colorless, tasteless. Nonfatal if you're in reasonably good health. It interrupts the voluntary nervous system. A sort of paralization—except the muscles that control the eyes and vocal cords. An interesting side effect, don't you think?"

Uncomfortably, from Killingsworth. "Yes. Interesting. Need I ask why?"

"I believe I said so earlier. The general

impression is that you're the only one who stands a real chance against me. With you and Dana here—who was a very unexpected bonus—gone, along with certain clues that would leave absolutely no doubt as to the perpetrator, your deaths can create a little breathing room for me. And that can be extremely useful." Alex rose and went over to Carla's easy chair. Like the others, she too was immobilized, but watched his moves as best as she could. From under her chair he produced a knife.

"We're not all that different, Alexander—or whatever your name may be."

Intrigued, Alex looked at him. "Really? How so?"

"We both kill, don't we? How can we be that much different?"

Alex snorted. "That's like saying the doctor who sets your broken ankle is like the Nazi death-camp doctors. All because, supposedly, they are doctors. Our difference, Killingsworth, lies in the reasons for our killing. You kill for money, among other things. I kill for other things."

"Such as honor?"

"Such as honor," Alex sighed. "Such as for what is right and good. Killing is an act that doesn't solve everything everytime. When I don't have to kill, I don't."

"Some of our differences aren't as great as you say they are. That we are both killers—no matter our motives or actions."

"Sure, it's a small thing. But a very important difference, you see. I would die before I became like you, Killingsworth." Alex sighed. "Are you ready yet?"

Killingsworth never got a chance to reply.

When he turned to Dana, she had resigned herself to her fate. "Go ahead," she told him. "Get it over with."

And he did.

Carla was in no way ready to leave, but how could she escape the fate of her employer? "Please," she said quietly. "Make it quick."

"Why should I kill you?" Alex asked, kneeling by her chair.

*How stupid can a person be?*, she thought. How can he be as brilliant as Killingsworth had believed if he asked a question like that?

"Let me see. You'd like to know why I'm not going to kill you. But you're afraid of bringing that point up. You're afraid that it will bring to my mind the fact that you could identify me."

He sheathed the blade and placed it in a coat pocket. "You could no more identify me than my own mother could now, Carla. How do you know this is how I really look? That this is the way I really speak? How do you know that there is an Alexander Duncan alive on the face

of the earth?" He smiled. "I could seduce you tomorrow night and you'd never know unless I told you afterwards."

"So go ahead. Tell the police about me. Give them as accurate a description of me as you can. They couldn't catch me in a million years. Give that description to the legions of enemies. It'll be just as useless to them too, Carla."

"You—really meant what you said to him, didn't you?" It came rather slow at first, while her whole being sighed in relief at the possibility of not dying.

"Of course I did."

"If he had been you—he wouldn't have let me live. That's an awfully small difference. I mean, what's one more body after you've just killed two?"

He shrugged. "Sometimes the smallest things make the greatest difference," he said softly.

"If—you're not going to kill me, then what about—"

"Your present condition? It'll wear off in time. Go to sleep. When you wake up in the morning, it will be gone. You appear to be relatively healthy, Carla. There'll be no side effects, other than a little stiffness."

He fetched his trenchcoat.

"How do you know for sure? Do you test your poisons on yourself?"

Alex chuckled. "No, I don't. Actually, I'm not the chemical's inventor. That honor belongs to a Russian chemist by the name of Malinkova. The KGB once used it on me, much to their later sorrow. And I received a much higher dosage than you did tonight. When you recover, restrict your drinking to tap water and you'll be fine." He paused at the door. "I am sorry that you became somewhat involved tonight. It was unavoidable. I'm sorry. Good night."

"Alex! Or whoever!"

"Yes?"

Is—is what Paul said true? That you're a ninja?

A long moment passed before he finally said, "Yes," and put that place behind him.

On his way out, Alex asked himself, *How many does that make now?* Belinda, Honey, Min. And now Carla. The privy few were growing—and he wasn't sure he could trust Carla with that knowledge.

At least Carla was proof of the difference between himself and Killingsworth. That was important. Another difference was the fact that he never particularly good after the kill. It was not regret that he felt—their deaths had been necessary. But then, he wasn't feeling joyous because he had won over the incredible odds against his continued existence. It was more of a sort of moodiness, an intellectual and emotional questioning of why the world worked the

way it did.

He and Killinsworth were similar in some respect, too. They had both become what they had because of who they were to begin with. And people and events had shaped them into what they were today. People and events had shaped Kill-

ingsworth into what he had been. The same was true of Alex; only the end result had been slightly different.

Perhaps it was their similarities that bothered him.

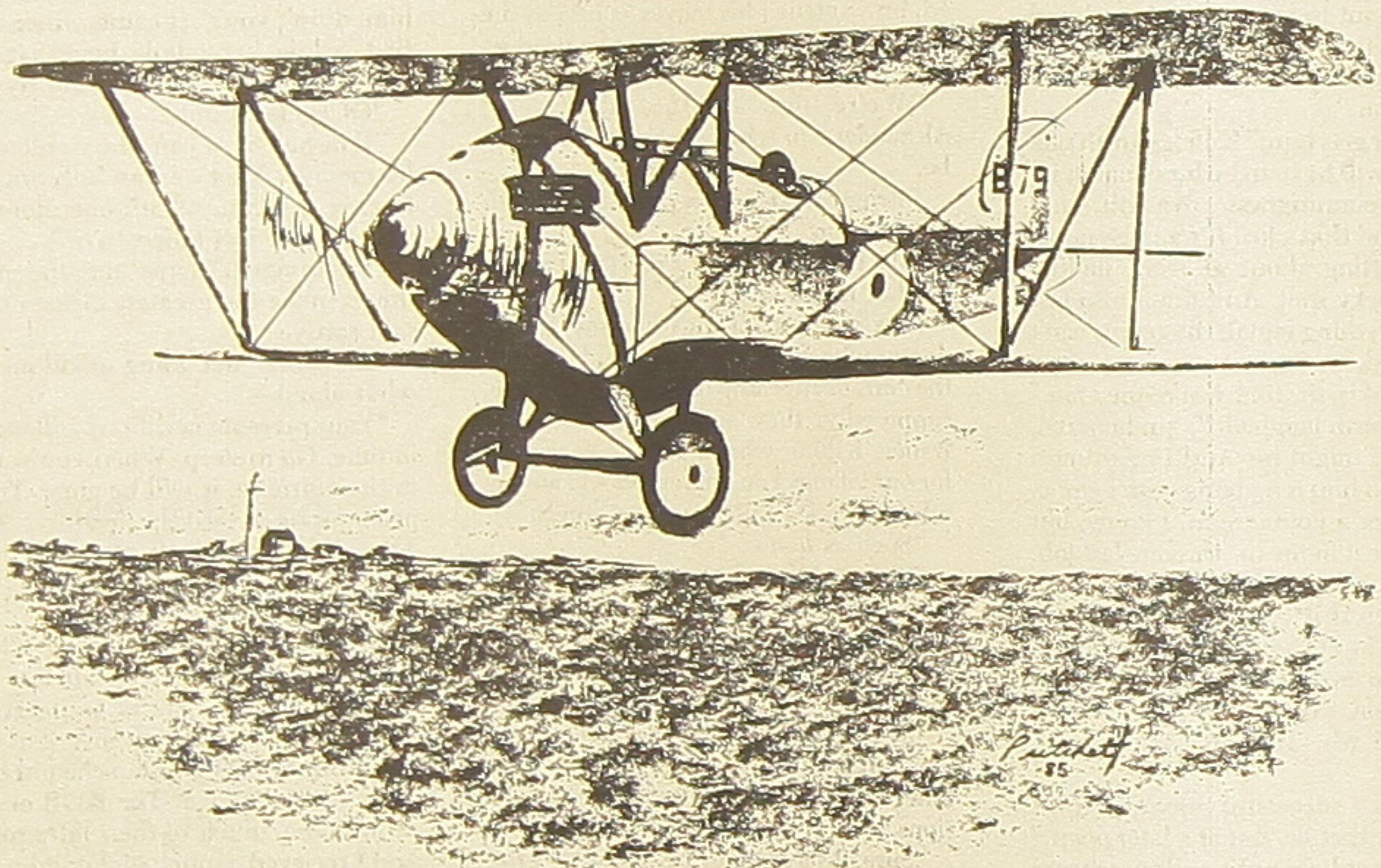
What was it that he had said to Carla? "Sometimes the smallest things make the

greatest differences." It was true; very true.

The doorman opened the door for him.

"Good night, sir," he said with a smile. He probably meant it, Alex reflected.

"No way," he replied, stepping back into the wet, concrete jungle.



## Flight Time

Morning grew late, as time crept by.  
Lindberg prepared for flight.  
His crew worked efficiently, and up  
to the moment,  
in hopes of preparing "The Spirit" just right.

No perfection was reached; Good enough!  
It was now stay or try.  
He knew what to do, and where to go  
but not whether he'd live or die.

He made his departure off to the sky  
easier said than done.  
He'd so far to fly and so little sleep  
his fears he learned to shun.

Ocean and sea, sea and ocean  
the flight shear monotony  
chancy encounter, success growing bleak.  
Sea and ocean, ocean and sea.

Signs of life! People below!  
a complete restoration of hope  
ahead of time, right on line  
just at the end of his rope

Completion quite simple, a flight over land  
a course to his destination  
He'd landed in Paris, people abound  
another step for aviation—

# Old October

By Doug Johnson

Danny Jones prowled the streets of Philadelphia with a mad exaltancy and a wild effort to find an answer in the faces of the strange and staring people of the city.

He roamed and prowled the streets at night, alone, and yet absolutely surrounded by the vague and blurry visages of the night people of the place. He made his way quickly and nervously through the streets, the echo of his footsteps rising up from a hundred sidewalks where a thousand faces swam around him like a spectral madness, his dark face tensed in a tortured scowl of longing and disillusionment, his long, sinewy body twitching like a finger on a gun.

In the lonely depths of the night he went running silently through the darkness of the empty backstreets, feeling as though there were a hundred stares upon him in the blackness. He ran as if from or to something that was irrevocable, inevitable, and strangely, something that was unknown to him.

While he ran, a strange and strong magic of life filled him and it pounded through his heart and coursed through his veins as if he were breathing the golden light of the full moon. A mad exaltance went through him as he ran in the darkness beneath the golden moon, and he felt the coolness of the air all around him, the gathering coldness, feeling for a brief moment the security of the intoxicating darkness that swept around him on all sides. He felt somehow that the darkness protected him, that it encompassed him forever all around, that it kept him from all harm.

Danny slept only in the morning for a few hours and then went back to working on his writing, furiously pounding words into the paper before going to work at the department store where he had worked since college. And then again to the maddening streets and the strange, yet familiar faces that roamed the streets with him, the faces that coursed and tossed and flowed behind, beside, and in front of him in an unending current of restless life.

Then he would go back again to his strange practise of running silently in the darkness below the stark glow of the midnight moon. This practise was a kind of curious training for his body and mind; it was the giver of sweet exhaustion that was good in the beginning light of morning, a sweet lethe that took away the strange and haunting thoughts of night so that he could finally sleep.

This strange roaming and prowling of the city streets at night had lasted the en-

tire length of the summer. This was his sweet oblivion from life as well as the only contact with people other than those with which he worked, this lonely, proud, exaltant running in the darkness to sooth the deep and haunting thoughts of his dark and troubled mind.

Everyone had moved away from him and he had been left alone. Both of his brothers had found jobs in other parts of the country and had left him. Karen and Amy Nichole had left him. His friend and uncle John Holman had gone.

John Holman had left for active duty in the Army on July 5th, leaving behind his wife and small son for a time. John Holman wrote Danny encouraging letters, and Danny tried to respond to them



in a positive manner.

John Holman wrote letters like this one:

I went over to the mail room and your letter dated July 17 was waiting for me. I reached in and it crawled up my arm and kissed me on the neck. Very fresh letter. But I am still happy to see it.

I still have not received a letter from anyone but you and my wife. Please tell everyone that I live on the fourth floor and the mailman is tired of me jumping on him each time he comes around.

I have found several people that said they would like to play tennis with me until I told them I used to play with you. They usually start to complain about an old tennis injury about then. As soon as I can I will start to play again. I hope to be ready to play when

I get back. My lungs are back in shape now, but it took me nearly two weeks of hard smoking to get them good and coated again with cigarette tar after basic training. They are black as ever now and I am happy.

I am very happy to hear from you, Danny. There are some great guys here, but none of them have the philosophical attitude toward life that you have.

Write me soon.

Danny always responded to John Holman's letters immediately. These letters and an occasional phone call from someone in his family kept Danny from total despair and loneliness.

Winter came on hard and cold and fierce that year when it finally arrived, dues of an early spring. Danny wandered and roamed the cold streets still, looking for an answer in the empty faces and the solemn, clay bricks of the buildings and in reflections in mirrors and windows.

He felt a strange and heavy presence with him always, an incredible oppression, as if his soul drug an awkward and heavy weight behind it, as if his heart beat within a plaster cast.

Leaves hurried down the sidestreets and through the empty backstreets of Philadelphia. The fall had come. The fall had come, ushering in the terrible winter. Like old and time-lost spirits, the leaves hurried through the city streets and over the cobblestone walks, rattling along over the dying earth, alone and brown and dead. They hurried with a bitter desperation through the streets, now cast away and broken off from their source of life. the fall had come. The fall had come to usher in the terrible winter.

And the leaves twisted from the boughs of trees in the neighboring countryside and ran scurrying, hurrying, like furious and time-lost spirits down the old Philadelphia sidewalks—down the sidewalks of that city time-lost and old-leaves brown and dead, rustling and rattling like spirits. Fall had come.

He felt a strange and heavy presence with him always and the leaves hurried up the sidewalks, dead and brown, and he roamed the streets like a time-lost spirit, looking for an answer in the empty and lonely faces of the city life and in dense clay bricks that were solemn. He gazed into mirrors and windows and saw there his own strange reflection and the reflection of the strange world around him.

When it grew too cold, Danny no

longer ran through the darkness in the night. No longer was there the terrible raging of his spirit in the night. No longer did the wild exaltancy pound his heart. No longer did the dark and troubled thought plague him in the night. All of this had now given way to exhaustion.

No longer did the loneliness and pride and fury pulse in his dark blood and the haunting thoughts of his troubled mind no longer bothered him in the night,

for he was much too tired to care. He slept hard and deep sleep in October, exhausted in his every fiber from the summer of endless running and the fury and the dark exaltancy of the deep, cool nights.

Leaves hurried down the sidestreets and backstreets of the city of old Philadelphia and Danny no longer ran through the darkness of the night. The fall had come and gone and had ushered in

the terrible, frozen winter. Leaves rattled and hurried like time-lost spirits, rattling and scraping and rustling, and Danny slept hard and deep sleep in old October. The leaves were alone and dead and brown and so was old October. Death had come to the living earth with the terrible winter. Danny slept deep and thoughtless sleep, exhausted from the summer. But still the leaves scratched and rattled and rustled like time-lost spirits...

## What a Pain!

**Itzhak was bodily threatened because  
He'd climbed up but not down from trees.  
His Master would shoot him with no moment's  
pause,  
Were it not for his Mistress's pleas.  
WHAT A PAIN!**

I saved him. I carried him home with me  
to be safe from the trees and the gun.  
He threw up on the floor, stuck his paws in my  
tea;  
Daughter Daphne thought it was such fun.  
WHAT A PAIN!

In the Spring we again sent Itzhak outside,  
With hopes that he's learn to come down.  
He stayed in a tree for a week;  
Daphne cried.  
The rest of us just watched and frowned.  
WHAT A PAIN!

He climbed up the curtains and ate from our  
plates;  
Very late at night he "meowed";  
His high jinks we did not appreciate,  
Daughter Daphne was so very proud.  
WHAT A PAIN!

Daughter Daphne used Itzhak, to love and to  
play.  
She loved him right from the start.  
Itzhak got sick, he died yesterday,  
What a pain in our Daphne's young heart.

—Michelle Shaw





## Masks

**Living behind our masks of life,  
A wardrobe of simple survival.  
Each one depicts a sense of feeling,  
In our quest for happiness.  
Those masks hide reality,  
Disguising the real being within each of us.**

—Melody Cundiff

## The Horserace

**lifting the wisp  
of a rider  
onto the dancing steed  
resting his soul  
on the leather strap  
mastering the 16 hands**

**the prism of silks  
spotting the oval track  
hypnotizing  
stealing the desires  
of the spellbound**

**stuffing the quarter  
into the dime slot  
five-to-one odds  
who will show**

—Susan Stone

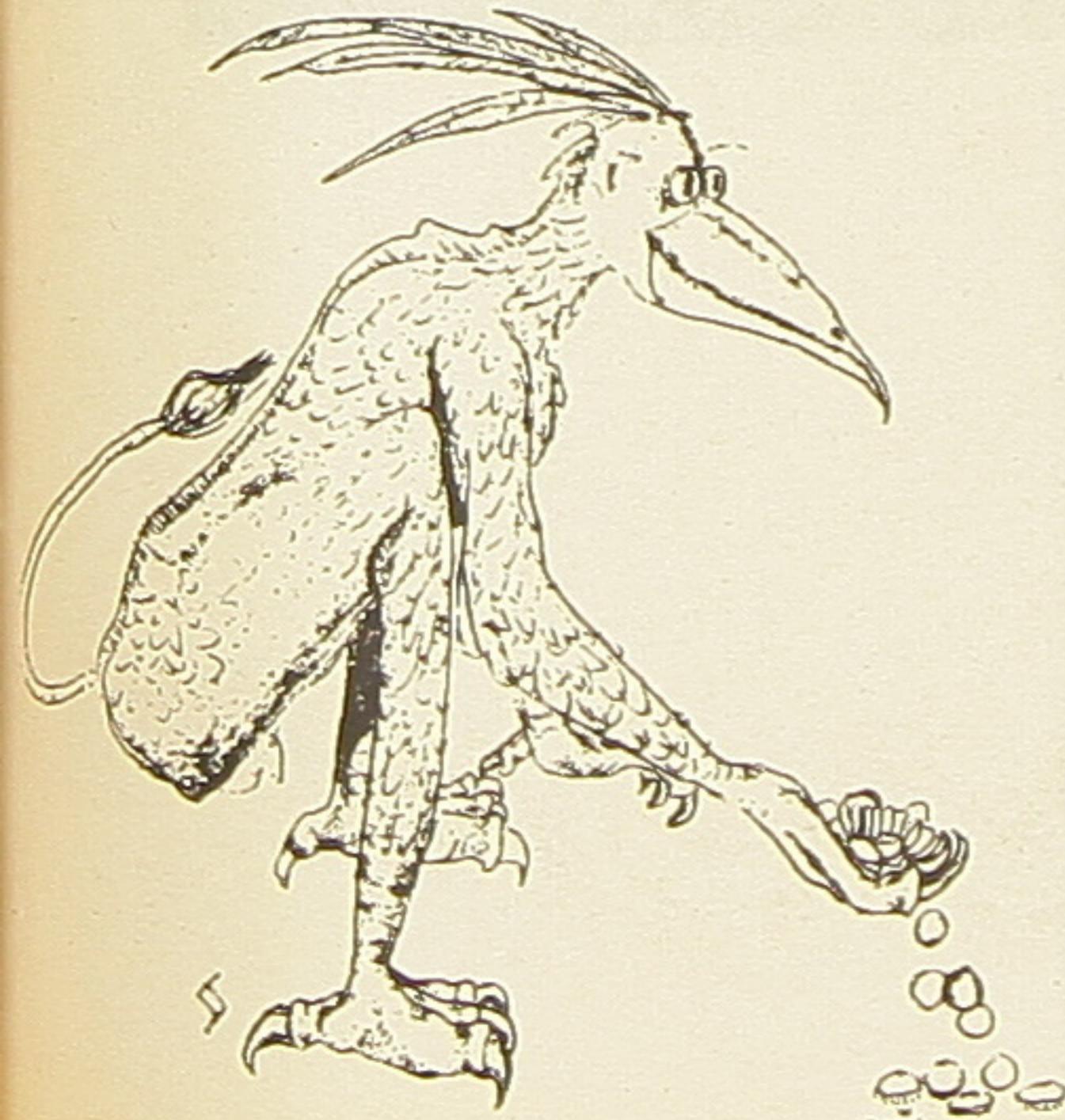


## Differences

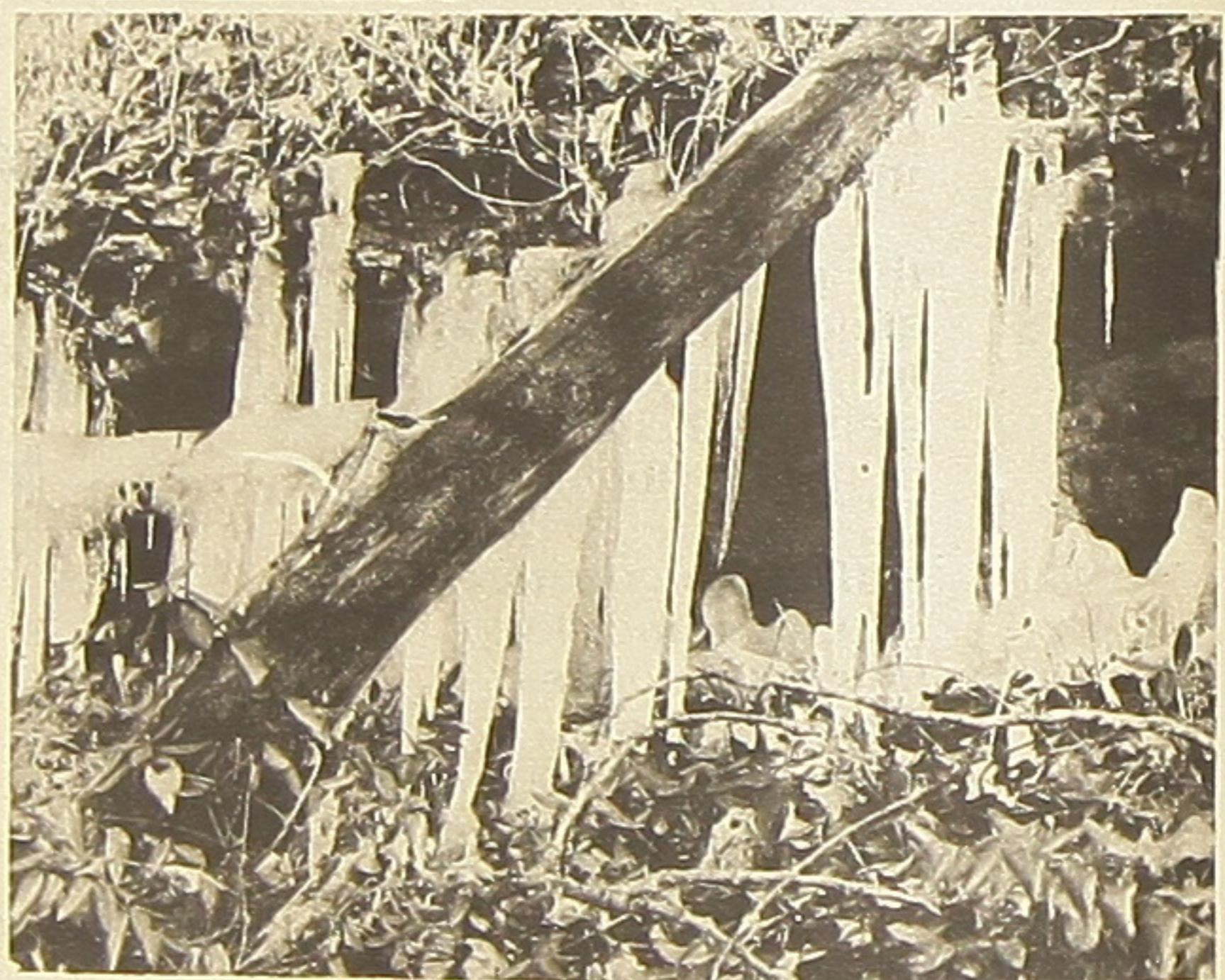
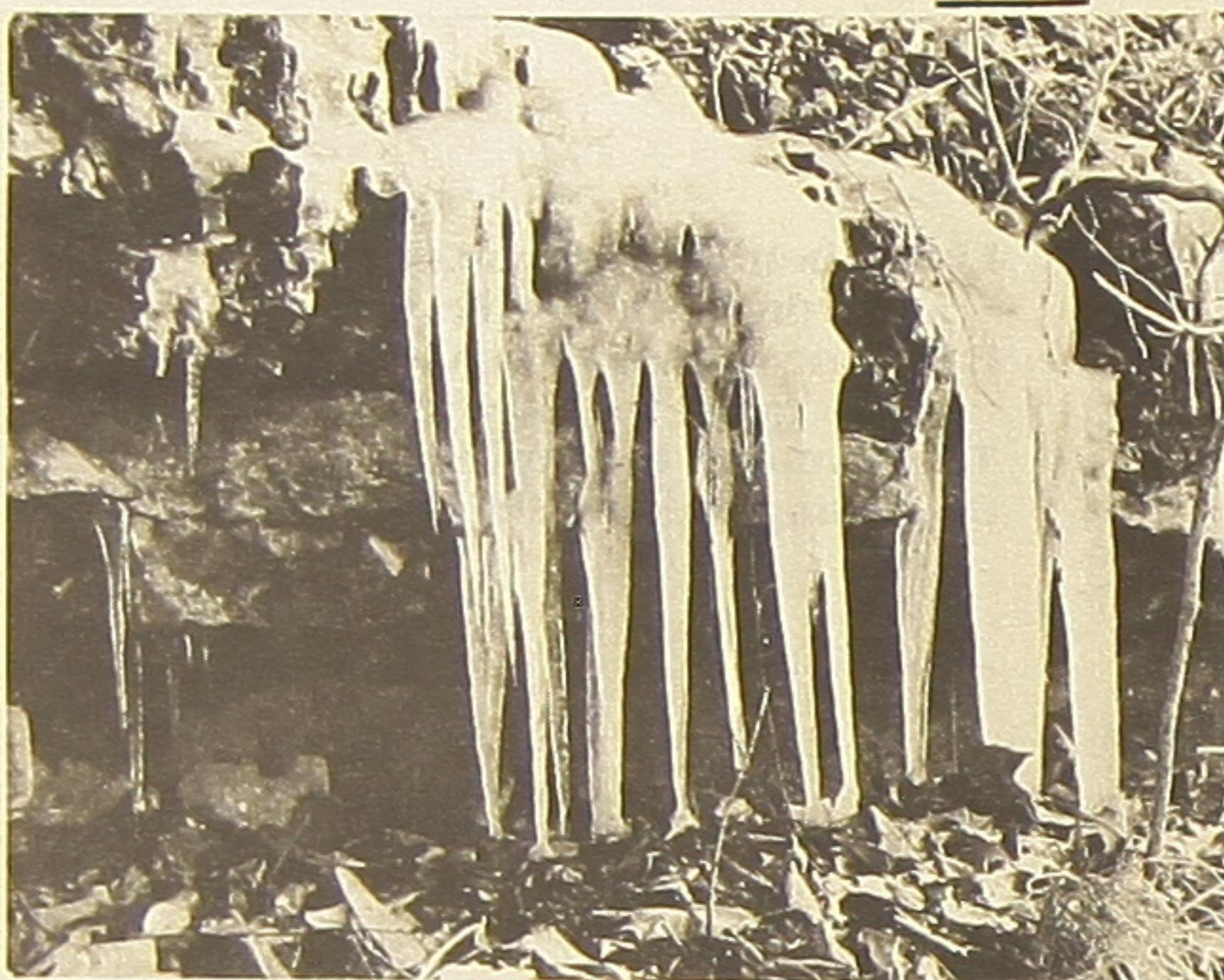
**What are the differences between you and me?  
If we closed our eyes, we would not see  
That you might be taller, or shorter, fair or tan  
You couldn't tell if I am woman or man.  
We both wouldn't see if we had all of our parts  
Yet we'd both know that we breathe and have hearts.**

**What else can a firmly based prejudice be  
Except for the differences our eyes only see?  
I've often wondered if we humans are so great  
To see differences with our eyes and immediately hate!**

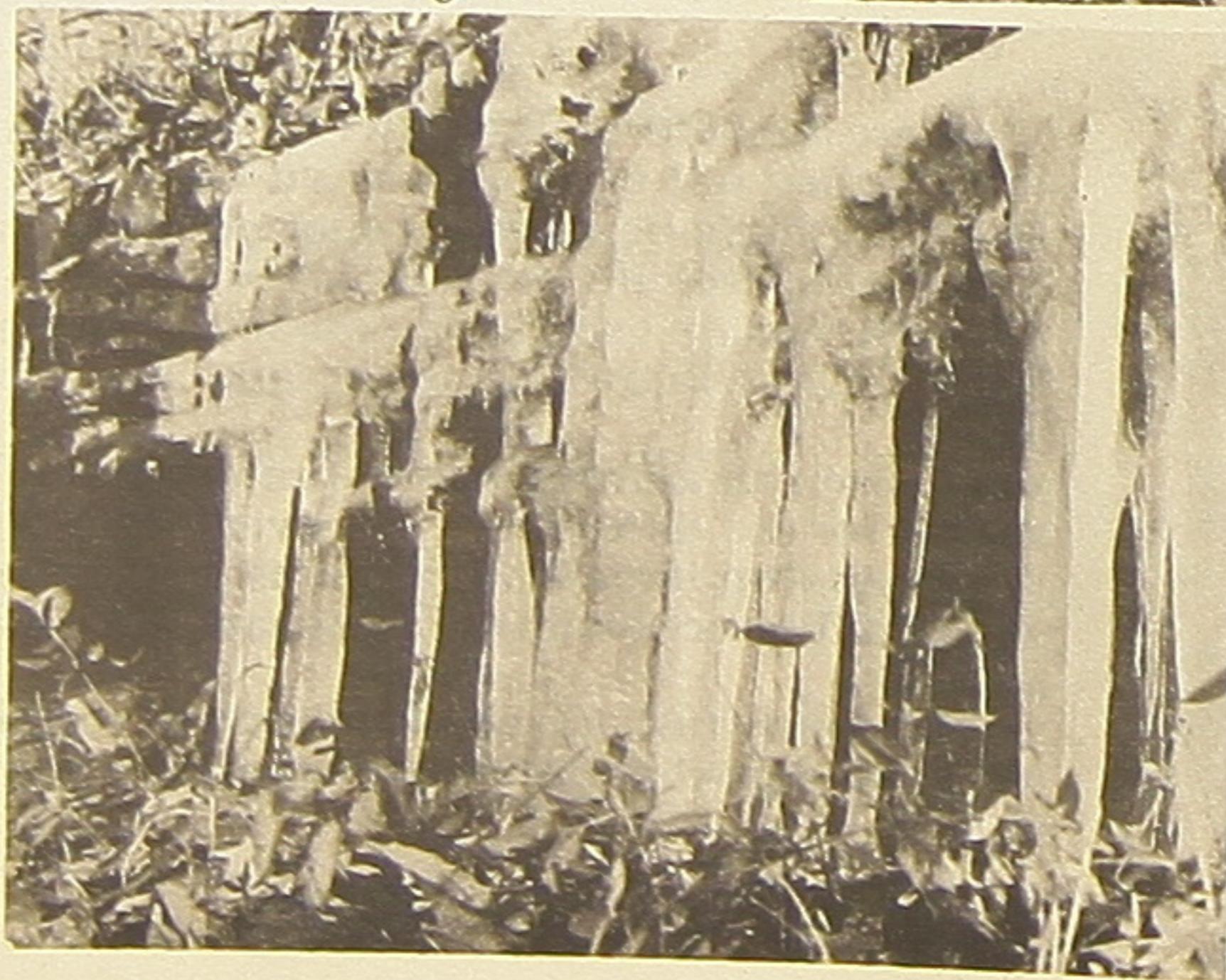
**Would it be awful if the whole world went blind?  
But I wonder what differences then, we could find.**



—Donovan



*Photos by Rick Evans*



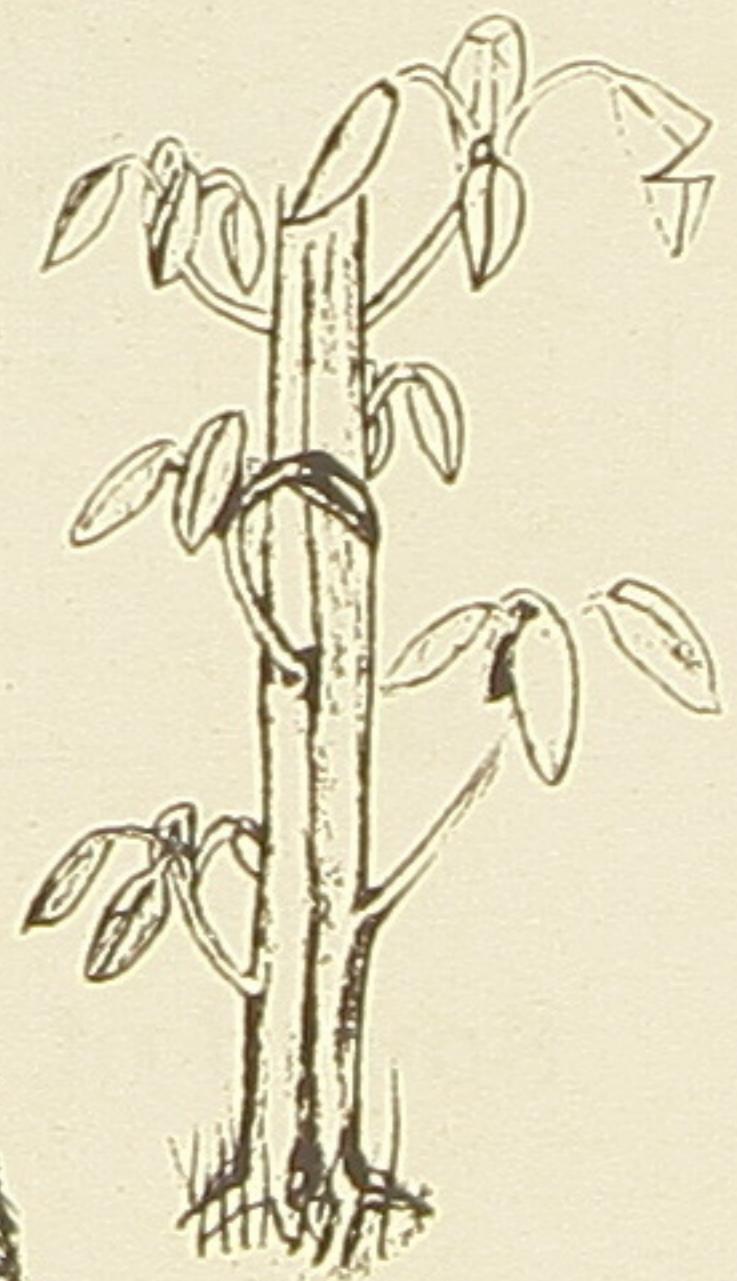
## Regrets

Last Sunday I went for a walk  
and found myself standing by that tree  
that used to offer us shade, she and I.

Picking up a small rock, I skip it  
on the surface of the pond, three times,  
just to see if I could still do it;  
she liked for me to do that and I seldom  
would. I thought it was childish then,  
wanting so much to present myself as a  
mature man but...I wish she could see me  
me do it now.

There's that little squirrel she used to feed,  
sitting there as if it's my fault  
that she's not here to feed him. Running up the  
old shade tree, he stares down at me  
as if to remind me of the day she asked me  
to carve our initials in it...I guess  
I'll do it now.

-Clenell Sandles



## The Shark

the silver gray  
dorsal fin  
slicing the wake  
like a cold steel blade

sliding closer  
skimming  
slipping away

the glistening sail  
sending signals  
of distress  
seeking out the helpless

sliding closer  
skimming  
sinking out of sight

—Susan Stone

## Life

A line that connects each end,  
It never breaks, it never bends.  
Life,  
    like that circle  
is a never ending voyage—  
To a place where time stands still

—Melody Cundiff



## Scars

Lonely, tough.  
She is.  
Hate is in her heart.  
Or so she says.  
But in her purse  
She carries a comb  
And it is pink.

## Sound of Laughter

The Blindness of Silence  
ever so dark and quiet.  
Until...  
That silence is broken—  
with the sound of Laughter

—Melody Cundiff

—Craig Ball